TEACHERS' CHALLENGES IN INTEGRATING DIGITAL MEDIA IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MERDEKA CURRICULUM

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Abstract:
This study aims to analyze the challenges encountered by English teachers in integrating digital media in the Merdeka Curriculum. The research participants are two English teachers at an islamic senior high school in Sidoarjo. The data collected from the interview are analyzed in relation to both the issue of technology integration in the teaching and learning process and the Indonesian new curriculum framework. The role of learning media is very important the quality of learning, breaking down complex concepts, and engaging students in a more interactive way. This study applies a qualitative method with a case study approach, focused on two English teachers who teach in different classes. Based on the result of this study, it is hoped that stakeholders will get useful recommendations to design more effective strategies in supporting media integration in the context of education in Indonesia.

Keywords: *Curriculum Merdeka, Media, Teacher Challenges*

1. INTRODUCTION

Media plays an important role in assisting teachers to facilitate teaching and learning. With the assistance of the media, teachers can effectively improve the quality of the learning experience, make complex concepts easier to understand, and engage students in a more interactive way. This article emphasizes that media is not just a supporting tool, but an integral part of modern pedagogical practice, which can transform traditional classrooms into more dynamic learning environments.

The use of media in education includes various formats such as visual, auditory, and interactive digital tools. From learning videos, podcasts, online simulations, to interactive applications and game-based learning platforms, media plays a role in enriching the way material is delivered. This diversity helps meet the needs of various learning styles, increases accessibility, and allows teachers to reach students with diverse needs and abilities. As the use of technology in education increases, media is now considered essential in both face-to-face and virtual learning.

Patel (2020) mentioned that the presence of technology in the world of education has presented a new dimension by providing classes that seem interesting and motivating students in learning and this experience provides new challenge in teaching the four skills in English (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) using technology has given a distinct impression to learning activities. Normawati (2021) said that teaching using technology can be used as a distraction or blended learning, especially teaching students' reading skill because blended learning as a variation of learning method can be implemented depending on the condition and situation of class.

While the media has positive contributions to teaching and learning, these findings do not fully reflect the complexity of its application across educational contexts. For example, Patel (2020) and Normawati (2021) highlight the benefits of using technology in language learning, but they do not address how these media tools function in

classrooms with multilingual or multicultural students. Such an environment can pose challenges in terms of comprehension and engagement, especially when language barriers are present. Furthermore, while blended learning has been shown to improve certain skills, its effectiveness across subjects and levels of education remains under-researched.

There is a significant gap in research regarding the long-term impact of media integration on diverse learner groups. While media can improve engagement and comprehension, little is known about whether these improvements are consistent across students with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. For example, how do students from multilingual environments respond to media-based learning? Can media bridge the comprehension gap for students with diverse learning needs, or does it create new barriers? These questions become increasingly relevant as diversity increases in classrooms, making a deeper understanding of the impact of media essential for its effective use in education.

Furthermore, this phenomenon needs to be studied in greater depth to understand how media and technology can be adapted to specific educational needs, especially in relation to an evolving curriculum such as the Merdeka Curriculum in indonesia. The Merdeka Curriculum encourages flexibility and creativity in teaching methods, allowing teachers to tailor learning to suit students' needs and interests. Media can play a significant role in this curriculum by providing diverse and flexible learning resources that support students' individual learning pathways. However, further research is needed to explore how media tools can be adapted to the goals of the Merdeka Curriculum, especially in terms of supporting a variety of learning abilities and encouraging independence and directed learning.

With these questions in mind, it is important for future research to explore the potential of media in the Merdeka Curriculum. In doing so, educators can better understand how to optimize the use of media to support the goals of the curriculum, while ensuring equitable access to learning resources for all students, regardless of their background or learning style. Understanding the balance between the benefits of media and the challenges that may arise is key to creating a more inclusive and effective educational environment in this digital age.

One of the objectives of my research is to explore the challenges faced by teachers in integrating educational media in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. This research is expected to provide deeper insight into the practical and conceptual obstacles faced by educators when using media as a learning tool in the classroom that is more flexible and directed at student needs. Through this understanding, this research seeks to identify areas that require further support, both in terms of teaching training, media development, and relevant education policies.

This research aims to identify perceived barriers to the use of educational media in classes implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. By analyzing teacher perceptions regarding the effectiveness and obstacles in using these media, this research will reveal factors that influence the adoption and optimal use of technology in learning. The findings of this research are expected to provide relevant recommendations for

stakeholders in developing more effective strategies in supporting the integration of educational media in various educational contexts in Indonesia.

2. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative method with a case study approach. This design is relevant since this research wants to delve deeply into the specific challenges that teachers encounter in integrating digital media within the context of the Merdeka curriculum. Two professional English teachers, having a long history of teaching experience, at one of islamic senior high schools in Sidoarjo are selected as the research participants. Having considerable experience both in teaching and in the use of teaching media, the selected research participants are expected to provide interesting as well as unique and diverse insights regarding the use of digital media in the teaching and learning process.

Data collection techniques in this research include questionnaires, classroom observations, and document analysis. For a semi-structured questionnaire is designed to identify teachers' views regarding the use of digital media. Classroom observation is also conducted to observe the use of media in teaching. In addition, an analysis of teachers' teaching modules are done to explore their preparation and planning in the use of media in the learning process.

The interview is conducted in a semi-structured manner with the aim of gaining more insight into the challenges and difficulties faced by teachers in integrating educational media into the Merdeka curriculum. Each interview lasts for approximately thirty minutes with each participant in turn. Before the interview begins, the participants are given an explanation about the purpose of the study, and they are already qualified and willing to assist the researchers in answering any questions that may come up. The interview is conducted in the MAN Sidoarjo teaching room in accordance with the teacher's strict timetable so that students feel more at ease and are not disturbed by the learning activities. Prioritizing questions during the interview is based on previously discussed topics, but the interview also has the flexibility to ask follow-up questions based on participant participation. Each interview is trained using a voice recorder with a participant goal in order to ensure the accuracy of the data that is obtained. In addition to that, the participants also note important points to remember when the walk is underway.

3. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This research focuses on the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at MAN Sidoarjo, specifically exploring the integration of educational media in the teaching process. Two experienced English teachers were selected as participants based on their backgrounds and familiarity with educational media, which facilitated a comprehensive investigation into the challenges they face when integrating these tools in their classrooms. By choosing teachers with sufficient experience, this research aims to gather significant insights into their practices and the constraints they encounter in effectively utilizing educational media in accordance with the Merdeka Curriculum.

To collect data, this research employs various methods, including semi-structured questionnaires, classroom observations, and analysis of teaching module documents. These various techniques have proven to be important in identifying the pedagogical and technical challenges faced by teachers when using educational media. Semi-structured questionnaires provide an opportunity to delve deeper into teachers' perceptions and experiences, while classroom observations offer direct insights into their teaching practices and student interactions. Document analysis provides context regarding the planning and objectives of using educational media within the framework of the established curriculum.

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3.1 Key Findings from the Interview

1. Frequency of Resource Use: Teachers primarily rely on the Pathway textbooks and PowerPoint presentations as their main teaching resources. They also frequently use YouTube videos to enhance the visualization of complex concepts, which facilitates better understanding among students. This mix of resources demonstrates a deliberate effort to create more interactive and engaging lessons.

2. Challenges in the Utilization of Media: The main challenge highlighted by teachers is the limited availability of functional technological resources, particularly projectors. These limitations often hinder their ability to use the media consistently as planned. When technology devices fail, they must revert to traditional teaching methods, which negatively impacts student engagement and lesson effectiveness, highlighting a reliance on technology that is not always reliable.

3. Knowledge Gap in Media Usage: The teachers expressed concerns about the lack of training available to effectively utilize educational media. Many report needing to engage in self-directed learning or seek help from more experienced peers to tackle technological challenges. This highlights an important gap in professional development that can enhance teachers' skills in media integration.

4. Adaptation to Technological Limitations: When faced with technological issues, teachers adapt by using traditional teaching methods, such as utilizing handwritten notes or leading class discussions. Although this adaptability is commendable, it often diminishes the effectiveness of lessons, resulting in low student attention and engagement. This situation highlights the need for a stronger contingency plan to keep students engaged, even when technology fails.

3.2 Class Observation

Teachers at an islamic senior high school in Sidoarjo effectively utilize Pathway books and PowerPoint presentations as the main tools in teaching the Merdeka Curriculum. These media facilitate the delivery of materials through an engaging visual approach, thus helping students understand complex concepts better. in addition, digital media such as Youtube videos are often used to enrich the learning experience, especially when additional explanations are needed. This approach creates a more positive classroom atsmosphere, where students show greater enthusiasm during lessons supported by visual aids. However, techinical challenges are a major obstacle in the use of digital media. Problems such as malfunctioning projectors or device limitations often disrupt the learning process. This situation forces teachers to revert to less engaging tradional methods, such as using motes or silent discussion. which negarively impact the effectiveness of the lesson. in additional, distractions from students' cellphone use add to the challenge of maintaining student focus in the digital era.

Limited training is also an issue. Teachers feel that education related to the use of digital media is inadequate, with training tending to be general and not specific to the needs of technology in the classroom. Often, teachers have to learn independently or ask for help from colleagues to understand the technology they are implementing. This study shows that although digital media has great potential to enhance the learning experience and support the goals of the Merdeka Curriculum, technical and training challenges are major barriers. To overcome this problem, there needs to be increased access to reliable technology and more targeted professional development for teachers in using educatioanal media effectively. This step is very important to maximize the potential of Merdeka Curriculum in enriching education at islamic senior high school in Sidoarjo.

From the statement above, I can conclude that the summary above has answered my research question, namely "What are the challenges faced by teachers in integrating digital media in implementing the Independent Curriculum?" and the answer is Yes, the statement above answers the research question by identifying the main challenges as follows:

1. **Technical constraints**, including unreliable equipment, such as problematic projectors.
2. **Limited training**, which requires teachers to learn independently or with the help of colleagues.
3. **Distractions from students**, such as the use of cell phones in class, which can reduce concentration.
4. **Reliance on traditional** methods when technology is not working, which reduces the effectiveness of learning.

3.3 Question and Answer

This section outlines the results of interviews and classroom observations, focusing on teachers' challenges in integrating learning media in the Merdeka Curriculum, such as technical constraints, lack of training, and its impact on learning. These findings are compared with previous studies to identify similarities and differences in technology use, providing a broader picture of the reality on the ground and its contribution to more effective media integration strategies.

1. What educational resource do you most frequently use in your classroom when teaching the Merdeka curriculum?

   "I frequently use the Pathway textbook for instruction and PowerPoint presentations as the primary teaching tool. Use YouTube videos frequently if necessary. The two primary mediums here help me explain the material in a visual way so that students can understand it more easily."

2. What is the biggest mistake you made when using educational material in class?

   "The biggest obstacle is the limited access to advanced technological capabilities. For example, there are a few classes that have a projector, but there are issues with the projector. As a result, it is difficult for me to use the media consistently, and if the projector has problems, it will make less students focused on what I am trying to explain."

3. How can educational media help students meet the learning objectives of the Merdeka curriculum?

   "Educational media significantly aids students in understanding abstract concepts. Through media, students can observe visuals and animations that make the material more interesting and relevant to the real world. However, the media must also exercise caution to ensure that it matches the desired level of competence."

4. Do you think you have enough knowledge to use educational media effectively already?

   "Tellingly, education about the use of educational media is still lacking. I frequently need to learn on her own or ask more knowledgeable coworkers questions about technology. Despite the training, the focus is usually general and not specifically on the media needs that I use."

5. How do you explain technological limitations when the teaching medium you use doesn't work as intended?

   "In general, we should quickly adjust and look for other solutions, such as using traditional teaching methods. If technology isn't working, I go back to my notes or provide the students materials in the form of silent discussions. However, this may reduce the effectiveness of the lessons that I am committed to teaching."

3.4 Classroom Observation

In class observations, it was seen that teachers utilized Pathway textbooks and PowerPoint presentations as teaching media, in accordance with the teaching modules that had been prepared. The use of these two media consistently helped

teachers in delivering material visually, especially when explaining more abstract or difficult-to-understand concepts. YouTube videos were also used if the material required additional visualization, especially to clarify information that was difficult to understand only through text or presentations. Students appeared more responsive when visual media was used, indicating that these tools greatly contributed to their understanding. The classroom atmosphere became more relaxed, and students appeared more enthusiastic and active. Teachers had also implemented game methods, such as constructing sentences correctly from random text.

However, during the observation, there were several technological constraints raised by teachers that were also confirmed. In some classes, there were limitations to technological devices, especially projectors, which often did not function properly. This hindered the consistent use of media and resulted in reduced student attention to learning. When technical problems arose, teachers were forced to return to traditional teaching methods, such as whiteboards or direct discussions. Observations showed that this transition did not always go smoothly and sometimes made students less actively involved. On the other hand, there are also negative impacts, namely that students often pay less attention to teachers and are seen playing with their cellphones.

Based on the results of this observation, it can be concluded that although technology-based educational media such as PowerPoint and YouTube videos are very effective in helping students understand the material, technical limitations are a significant obstacle in the integration of these media. Teachers try to adapt quickly when technology does not support, but the traditional solutions applied, such as providing notes or having silent discussions, often reduce the expected learning effectiveness. This suggests that there needs to be more stable access to technology and more in-depth training on the use of educational media to achieve optimal learning outcomes.

Once the interviews are completed, the texts will be edited and analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. This process begins with reading the transcripts to understand the overall context. Then, it is continued by using initial codes to identify the main ideas or themes that emerge from the participants' responses. This type of analysis is done inductively, meaning that it only relies on the facts obtained, rather than classifying or analyzing previous theories. The codes in question are then applied to more general themes related to the challenges of using educational media.

Next, each topic will be assessed to determine the relationship between the subject and other topics and to identify any patterns that are specifically related to the technological, pedagogical, and contextual challenges that teachers face when integrating media into the classroom. This process is repeated several times to ensure that all data is analyzed thoroughly and that no important information is missed.

Participants are given the opportunity to review their interview transcripts if they wish, to clarify statements that may have been misinterpreted, ensuring that there are no errors in interpretation. The final results of the thematic analysis are expected to reveal the main patterns related to media use and provide an in-depth understanding of the challenges faced by teachers in implementing the Independent Curriculum.

From the answers given by the teachers, it can be concluded that to help students understand the material, especially abstract concepts, teachers usually use simple and familiar educational media such as textbooks, PowerPoint presentations, and YouTube videos. However, the main obstacle in optimizing the use of these media is limited access to technology, such as projectors that do not function properly. Although educational media have been proven to be successful in achieving the learning objectives of the Independent Curriculum, there is still a lack of instructions on how to use them. When the media does not work, teachers often have to adapt quickly. However, this can reduce the effectiveness of learning. From the results of interviews, classroom observations, and data analysis, everything went smoothly and in accordance with the explanation that the researcher had written.

From the results above, it can be concluded that there are similarities and several differences obtained by researchers and the results obtained by previous researchers.These three studies emphasize the importance of technology in education, especially in supporting the English language learning process. Patel (2020) stated that technology provides a new dimension in learning, especially to increase student motivation and support the teaching of four English language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Normawati (2021) showed that technology can function both as a distractor tool and in a blended learning model to improve students' reading skills. On the other hand, research conducted at an Islamic senior high school in Sidoarjo also highlighted the use of digital media such as PowerPoint, YouTube, and Pathway textbooks as an important part of the teaching contained in the Merdeka Curriculum. All of these studies tell that technology has great potential in improving the teaching and learning experience.

Despite their similarity in emphasizing the benefits of technology, these three studies have different focuses. Patel (2020) examines more the impact of technology on student motivation and learning experiences in general. On the other hand, Normawati (2021) focuses on the effectiveness of blended learning related to reading skills, depending on the situation in the classroom. The study conducted at an Islamic senior high school in Sidoarjo highlighted the specific challenges faced by teachers in implementing educational media under the Merdeka Curriculum, such as limited technological devices, lack of training, and distractions from students. This study provides deeper insights into the technical and pedagogical aspects of technology use, especially in diverse local contexts.

There are other differences in this study and previous studies such as in terms of the Complexity of Learning Contexts Patel (2020) and Normawati (2021) do not discuss in detail how technology operates in the context of multilingual or multicultural students, which often poses challenges in terms of student understanding and engagement. Meanwhile, the study conducted at MAN Sidoarjo directly explores the technical constraints and adaptation strategies implemented by teachers when faced with limitations in technological resources. This study also emphasizes the importance of relevant training to support effective technology integration.

And this is the last difference found, namely Implications for Educational Research and PracticeThe three studies provide complementary contributions. Patel (2020) and Normawati (2021) present a theoretical basis for the benefits of technology, while research at MAN Sidoarjo provides practical insights into the application of technology in the field, including the various obstacles faced. These findings emphasize the importance of providing relevant training, increasing access to reliable technology, and designing learning methods that are able to integrate technology with traditional methods to overcome various limitations.

4. CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate that teachers at MAN Sidoarjo experience various difficulties in integrating learning media in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. Although media such as videos, PowerPoint presentations, and YouTube are effective in helping students understand complex concepts, there are significant technical barriers. These barriers include limited access to technology and frequent malfunctioning of devices, such as broken projectors or unstable internet connections. This forces teachers to return to using traditional teaching methods, such as whiteboards or lectures, which, although useful, are less interactive and tend not to be able to maintain students' attention, thus reducing the effectiveness of learning.

Another important finding is the lack of special training for teachers in using innovative learning media. Many teachers feel that they are not yet skilled enough to utilize technology optimally in the classroom, so they have to learn on their own or ask for help from more experienced colleagues. This condition creates a gap in teachers' ability to use digital media that should be able to improve the quality of learning. Although there are efforts to adapt to technological limitations, the traditional methods used do not always match the needs of students who are more familiar with technology.

This study also emphasizes the need to increase access to more reliable technology in schools, such as well-functioning projectors, adequate computer equipment, and stable internet connections. With better technological infrastructure, teachers will find it easier to integrate learning media consistently and effectively into the teaching and learning process. In addition, more in-depth and focused professional training is needed for teachers, especially in the use of digital media and educational technology. This training should be directed at how media can support the goals of the Independent

Curriculum, namely encouraging more independent, creative, and student-centered learning.

Overall, this study recommends increasing technological support and teacher skill development through relevant training. These steps are expected to encourage more optimal integration of learning media in the Independent Curriculum, which will ultimately improve student learning outcomes in an increasingly diverse educational environment. With adequate technological support and appropriate training, teachers will be better prepared to utilize the full potential of digital media to create more dynamic, interactive, and meaningful learning experiences for students.

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